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WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for determining a protection path for a failure  
5 event link in an optical network of a set of nodes interconnected  
by a set of links, the method comprising:

receiving a set of link metrics corresponding to  
wavelength reservations for a set of protected links on a  
set of protection path links;

10 calculating a set of widths using the set of link  
metrics, each width corresponding to a capacity of a  
protection path link to protect the failure event link;

calculating a protection path including protection path  
links for the failure event link using the set of widths.

15 2. The method of Claim 1, wherein a width of a protection path  
link is a normalized difference between a maximum wavelength  
reservation on the protection path link and a wavelength  
reservation on the protection path link for the failure event  
link.

20 3. The method of Claim 2, wherein calculating a protection path  
further comprises:

determining a set of possible protection paths;

25 determining a protection path maximum width for the set  
of possible protection paths; and

selecting a protection path from the set of possible  
protection paths using the protection path maximum width.

30 4. The method of Claim 3, wherein determining a protection path  
maximum width further comprises:

determining a set of possible protection path widths  
from the set of possible protection paths; and

35 selecting a maximum possible protection path width from  
the set of possible protection path widths.

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5. The method of Claim 4, wherein the width of a possible protection path is a minimum of widths of the protection path  
5 links included in the possible protection path.

10 6. The method of Claim 3, wherein the protection path maximum width is a minimum width of the protection path links included in the possible protection paths.

15 7. The method of Claim 3 wherein selecting a protection path from the set of possible protection paths further comprises randomly selecting a protection path if the protection path maximum width is greater than zero.

20 8. The method of Claim 3 wherein selecting a protection path from the set of possible protection paths further comprises:

25 determining the number of protection path links of zero width included in each possible protection path; and

30 selecting the possible protection path with the fewest number of protection path links of zero width.

35 9. A method for establishing a protected working path from a source node to a terminal node in an optical network of a set of nodes interconnected by a set of links, the method comprising:

determining by the source node a working path including a set of working path nodes and a set of working path links;

transmitting to a first working path node from the source node a setup message including the protected working path;

determining a working path link linking the source node and the first working path node;

receiving a set of link metrics corresponding to wavelength reservations for a set of protected links on a set of protection path links;

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5 calculating a set of widths using the set of link metrics, each width corresponding to a capacity of a protection path link to protect the working path link;

calculating a protection path including protection path links for the working path link using the set of widths.

10 10. The method of Claim 9, wherein a width of a protection path link is a normalized difference between a maximum wavelength reservation on the protection path link and the wavelength reservation on the protection path link for the working path link.

15 11. The method of Claim 10, wherein calculating a protection path further comprises:

determining a set of possible protection paths;

20 determining a protection path maximum width for the set of possible protection paths; and

selecting a protection path from the set of possible protection paths using the protection path maximum width.

25 12. The method of Claim 11, wherein determining the protection path maximum width further comprises:

determining a possible protection path width for each of the possible protection paths in the set of possible protection paths; and

selecting a maximum possible protection path width.

30 13. The method of Claim 12, wherein the width of a possible protection path is a minimum of widths of the protection path links included in the possible protection path.

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5 14. The method of Claim 11, wherein determining the protection path maximum width further comprises determining a minimum width of the protection path links included in the possible protection paths.

10 15. The method of Claim 11, wherein selecting a protection path from the set of possible protection paths further comprises randomly selecting a protection path from the set of possible protection paths if the protection path maximum width is greater than zero.

15 16. The method of Claim 11 wherein selecting a protection path from the set of possible protection paths further comprises:

determining the number of protection path links of zero width included in each possible protection path; and

selecting the possible protection path with the fewest number of protection path links of zero width.

20 17. A method for establishing a protected working path from a source node to a terminal node in an optical network of a set of nodes interconnected by a set of links, the method comprising:

25 receiving by a node from a prior node a first setup message including a working path including a set of working path nodes and a set of working path links;

transmitting to a working path node from the node a second setup message including the protected working path;

determining a working path link linking the node and the working path node;

30 receiving a set of link metrics corresponding to wavelength reservations for a set of protected links on a set of protection path links;

35 calculating a set of widths using the set of link metrics, each width corresponding to a capacity of a protection path link to protect the working path link;

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5 calculating a protection path including protection path  
links for the working path link using the set of widths.

10 18. The method of Claim 17, wherein a width of a protection path  
link is a normalized difference between a maximum wavelength  
reservation on the protection path link and the wavelength  
reservation on the protection path link for the working path  
link.

15 19. The method of Claim 18, wherein calculating a protection  
path further comprises:

20 determining a set of possible protection paths;  
determining a protection path maximum width for the set  
of possible protection paths; and  
selecting a protection path from the set of possible  
protection paths using the protection path maximum width.

25 20. The method of Claim 19, wherein determining the protection  
path maximum width further comprises:

25 determining a possible protection path width for each  
of the possible protection paths in the set of possible  
protection paths; and  
selecting a maximum possible protection path width.

30 21. The method of Claim 20, wherein the width of a possible  
protection path is a minimum of widths of the protection path  
links included in the possible protection path.

35 22. The method of Claim 19, wherein determining the protection  
path maximum width further comprises determining a minimum width  
of the protection path links included in the possible protection  
paths.

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23. The method of Claim 19, wherein selecting a protection path  
from the set of possible protection paths further comprises  
5 randomly selecting a protection path from the set of possible  
protection paths if the protection path maximum width is greater  
than zero.

24. The method of Claim 19, wherein selecting a protection path  
10 from the set of possible protection paths further comprises:

determining the number of protection path links of zero  
width included in each possible protection path; and

selecting the possible protection path with the fewest  
number of protection path links of zero width.

15 25. A data processing system adapted to determine a protection  
path for a failure event link in an optical network of a set of  
nodes interconnected by a set of links, comprising:

a processor; and

20 a memory operably coupled to the processor and having  
program instructions stored therein, the processor being  
operable to execute the program instructions, the program  
instructions including:

25 receiving a set of link metrics corresponding to  
wavelength reservations for a set of protected links on  
a set of protection path links;

calculating a set of widths using the set of link  
metrics, each width corresponding to a capacity of a  
protection path link to protect the failure event link;

30 calculating a protection path including protection  
path links for the failure event link using the set of  
widths.

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26. The data processing system of Claim 25, wherein a width of  
a protection path link is a normalized difference between a  
5 maximum wavelength reservation on the protection path link and a  
wavelength reservation on the protection path link for the  
failure event link.

27. The data processing system of Claim 26, wherein the program  
10 instructions for calculating a protection path further include:

15 determining a set of possible protection paths;  
determining a protection path maximum width for the set  
of possible protection paths; and  
15 selecting a protection path from the set of possible  
protection paths using the protection path maximum width.

28. The data processing system of Claim 27, wherein the program  
instructions for determining a protection path maximum width  
further include:

20 determining a set of possible protection path widths  
from the set of possible protection paths; and  
selecting a maximum possible protection path width from  
the set of possible protection path widths.

25 29. The data processing system of Claim 28, wherein the width of  
a possible protection path is a minimum of widths of the  
protection path links included in the possible protection path.

30 30. The data processing system of Claim 27, wherein the  
protection path maximum width is a minimum width of the  
30 protection path links included in the possible protection paths.

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5 31. The data processing system of Claim 27, wherein the program instructions for selecting a protection path from the set of possible protection paths further include randomly selecting a protection path if the protection path maximum width is greater than zero.

10 32. The data processing system of Claim 27, wherein the program instructions for selecting a protection path from the set of possible protection paths further include:

15 determining the number of protection path links of zero width included in each possible protection path; and

20 selecting the possible protection path with the fewest number of protection path links of zero width.

25 33. A data processing system adapted to establish a protected working path from a source node to a terminal node in an optical network of a set of nodes interconnected by a set of links, comprising:

20 a processor; and

25 a memory operably coupled to the processor and having program instructions stored therein, the processor being operable to execute the program instructions, the program instructions including:

30 determining by the source node a working path including a set of working path nodes and a set of working path links;

35 transmitting to a first working path node from the source node a setup message including the protected working path;

determining a working path link linking the source node and the first working path node;

35 receiving a set of link metrics corresponding to

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5 wavelength reservations for a set of protected links on  
a set of protection path links;

10 calculating a set of widths using the set of link  
metrics, each width corresponding to a capacity of a  
protection path link to protect the working path link;

15 calculating a protection path including protection  
path links for the working path link using the set of  
widths.

20 34. The data processing system of Claim 33, wherein a width of  
a protection path link is a normalized difference between a  
maximum wavelength reservation on the protection path link and  
the wavelength reservation on the protection path link for the  
working path link.

25 35. The data processing system of Claim 34, wherein the program  
instructions for calculating a protection path further include:

30 determining a set of possible protection paths;

35 determining a protection path maximum width for the set  
of possible protection paths; and

40 selecting a protection path from the set of possible  
protection paths using the protection path maximum width.

45 36. The data processing system of Claim 35, wherein the program  
instructions for determining the protection path maximum width  
further include:

50 determining a possible protection path width for each  
of the possible protection paths in the set of possible  
protection paths; and

55 selecting a maximum possible protection path width.

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37. The data processing system of Claim 36, wherein the width of  
a possible protection path is a minimum of widths of the  
5 protection path links included in the possible protection path.

38. The data processing system of Claim 35, wherein the program  
instructions for determining the protection path maximum width  
further include determining a minimum width of the protection  
10 path links included in the possible protection paths.

39. The data processing system of Claim 35, wherein the program  
instructions for selecting a protection path from the set of  
possible protection paths further include randomly selecting a  
15 protection path from the set of possible protection paths if the  
protection path maximum width is greater than zero.

40. The data processing system of Claim 35, wherein the program  
instructions for selecting a protection path from the set of  
possible protection paths further include:  
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determining the number of protection path links of zero  
width included in each possible protection path; and

selecting the possible protection path with the fewest  
25 number of protection path links of zero width.

41. A data processing system adapted to establish a protected  
working path from a source node to a terminal node in an optical  
network of a set of nodes interconnected by a set of links,  
comprising:  
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a processor; and

a memory operably coupled to the processor and having  
program instructions stored therein, the processor being  
operable to execute the program instructions, the program  
instructions including:  
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5 receiving by a node from a prior node a first setup message including a working path including a set of working path nodes and a set of working path links;

transmitting to a working path node from the node a second setup message including the protected working path;

10 determining a working path link linking the node and the working path node;

15 receiving a set of link metrics corresponding to wavelength reservations for a set of protected links on a set of protection path links;

20 calculating a set of widths using the set of link metrics, each width corresponding to a capacity of a protection path link to protect the working path link;

25 calculating a protection path including protection path links for the working path link using the set of widths.

20 42. The data processing system of Claim 41, wherein a width of a protection path link is a normalized difference between a maximum wavelength reservation on the protection path link and the wavelength reservation on the protection path link for the working path link.

25 43. The data processing system of Claim 42, wherein the program instructions for calculating a protection path further include:

30 determining a set of possible protection paths;

determining a protection path maximum width for the set of possible protection paths; and

35 selecting a protection path from the set of possible protection paths using the protection path maximum width.

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44. The data processing system of Claim 43, wherein the program  
instructions for determining the protection path maximum width  
5 further include:

determining a possible protection path width for each  
of the possible protection paths in the set of possible  
protection paths; and

selecting a maximum possible protection path width.

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45. The data processing system of Claim 44, wherein the width of  
a possible protection path is a minimum of widths of the  
protection path links included in the possible protection path.

15 46. The data processing system of Claim 43, wherein the program  
instructions for determining the protection path maximum width  
further include determining a minimum width of the protection  
path links included in the possible protection paths.

20 47. The data processing system of Claim 43, wherein the program  
instructions for selecting a protection path from the set of  
possible protection paths further include randomly selecting a  
protection path from the set of possible protection paths if the  
protection path maximum width is greater than zero.

25 48. The data processing system of Claim 43, wherein the program  
instructions for selecting a protection path from the set of  
possible protection paths further include:

30 determining the number of protection path links of zero  
width included in each possible protection path; and

selecting the possible protection path with the fewest  
number of protection path links of zero width.

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5 49. A computer-readable storage medium embodying computer program instructions for execution by a computer, the computer program instructions adapting a computer to determine a protection path for a failure event link in an optical network of a set of nodes interconnected by a set of links, the computer instructions comprising:

10 receiving a set of link metrics corresponding to wavelength reservations for a set of protected links on a set of protection path links;

15 calculating a set of widths using the set of link metrics, each width corresponding to a capacity of a protection path link to protect the failure event link;

20 15 calculating a protection path including protection path links for the failure event link using the set of widths.

25 50. The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 49, wherein a width of a protection path link is a normalized difference between a maximum wavelength reservation on the protection path link and a wavelength reservation on the protection path link for the failure event link.

30 25 51. The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 50, wherein the program instructions for calculating a protection path further comprise:

35 determining a set of possible protection paths;

20 determining a protection path maximum width for the set of possible protection paths; and

25 30 selecting a protection path from the set of possible protection paths using the protection path maximum width.

35 52. The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 51, wherein the program instructions for determining a protection path maximum width further comprise:

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5 determining a set of possible protection path widths  
from the set of possible protection paths; and

5 selecting a maximum possible protection path width from  
the set of possible protection path widths.

10 53. The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 52, wherein  
the width of a possible protection path is a minimum of widths of  
the protection path links included in the possible protection  
path.

15 54. The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 52, wherein  
the protection path maximum width is a minimum width of the  
protection path links included in the possible protection paths.

20 55. The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 51, wherein  
the program instructions for selecting a protection path from the  
set of possible protection paths further comprise randomly  
selecting a protection path if the protection path maximum width  
is greater than zero.

25 56. The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 51, wherein  
the program instructions for selecting a protection path from the  
set of possible protection paths further comprise:

30 determining the number of protection path links of zero  
width included in each possible protection path; and

selecting the possible protection path with the fewest  
number of protection path links of zero width.

57. A method for establishing a protected working path from a  
source node to a terminal node in an optical network of a set of  
nodes interconnected by a set of links, the method comprising:

35 determining by the source node a working path including  
a set of working path nodes and a set of working path links;

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5 transmitting to a first working path node from the source node a setup message including the protected working path;

determining a working path link linking the source node and the first working path node;

10 receiving a set of wavelength reservations for a set of protected links on a set of protection path links;

15 calculating a set of a normalized differences between a maximum wavelength reservation on a protection path link and a wavelength reservation on the protection path link for the working path link;

determining a set of possible protection paths for the working path link;

20 determining a set of possible protection path widths from the set of possible protection paths;

25 selecting a maximum possible protection path width from the set of possible protection path widths;

if the number of possible protection paths is greater than one and the possible protection path maximum width is greater than zero then randomly selecting a protection path;

if the number of possible protection paths is greater than one and the protection path maximum width is equal to zero then performing the following:

30 determining the number of protection path links of zero width included in each possible protection path; and

selecting the possible protection path with the fewest number of protection path links of zero width; and

35 if the number of possible protection paths is equal to one then selecting the one possible protection path.

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58. A data processing system adapted to establish a protected working path from a source node to a terminal node in an optical network of a set of nodes interconnected by a set of links, comprising:

10 a processor; and  
a memory operably coupled to the processor and having program instructions stored therein, the processor being operable to execute the program instructions, the program instructions including:

15 determining by the source node a working path including a set of working path nodes and a set of working path links;

20 transmitting to a first working path node from the source node a setup message including the protected working path;

25 determining a working path link linking the source node and the first working path node;

30 receiving a set of wavelength reservations for a set of protected links on a set of protection path links;

35 calculating a set of a normalized differences between a maximum wavelength reservation on a protection path link and a wavelength reservation on the protection path link for the working path link;

determining a set of possible protection paths for the working path link;

35 determining a set of possible protection path widths from the set of possible protection paths;

selecting a maximum possible protection path width from the set of possible protection path widths;

if the number of possible protection paths is greater than one and the possible protection path

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maximum width is greater than zero then randomly selecting a protection path;

5 if the number of possible protection paths is greater than one and the protection path maximum width is equal to zero then performing the following:

10 determining the number of protection path links of zero width included in each possible protection path; and

15 selecting the possible protection path with the fewest number of protection path links of zero width; and

20 if the number of possible protection paths is equal to one then selecting the one possible protection path.

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